

## INTRODUCTION

Tom and Joe were out hunting in the woods when they got lost. Tom said, "I've heard that if you ever get in trouble, you fire three shots into the air and if anyone is around they will come to help you." So Tom shot three times into the air. Nothing happened. Then Joe shot three times in the air, and they waited. Nobody came. Tom, said, "I sure hope it works this time because we're down to our last three arrows." That's what I call ignorance!

As we get back into our verse-by-verse study of Hebrews, we are going to address the topic of spiritual ignorance. These Hebrew Christians were suffering from spiritual immaturity and ignorance. And the writer has to challenge them to "Move on to Maturity."

There is a lot of spiritual ignorance today as well. As we begin this message I want to give you a quick "Bible Knowledge Pop Quiz." Here are five questions from the Bible—and one bonus question. Take your pen and write your answers down on the top of your outline.

1. Who said, "Am I my brother's keeper?"
2. Who came first Moses or Noah?
3. Name the two sons of Abraham.
4. Name the first King of Israel.
5. Name the River where Jesus was baptized.

And the bonus question: Does "God helps those who help themselves" appear in the Old Testament or the New Testament?

So how did you do? Here are the answers. 1. Cain asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" 2. Noah came first; about a thousand years before Moses. 3. Abraham's two sons were Isaac and Ishmael. 4. Saul was the first King of Israel. 5. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River. And for the bonus question, "God helps those who help themselves" and no, that's not in the Bible.

So how did you do? As we look at our main text in Hebrews 6, the first word is "therefore." I've said many times that you never start reading a passage with the word therefore. You need to look back to see WHY it's there for. So, let's get a running start by going back to read Hebrews 5: 12-14:

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

And that launches us into Hebrews 6:1-3:

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in

God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.

Before you can move on to maturity, you have to have the elementary teachings nailed down. One of the most famous detectives in all of literature is Sherlock Holmes. His assistant was Dr. Watson. When they faced the challenge of solving a crime, you've probably seen a movie or television show where Sherlock Holmes said, "Elementary, my dear Watson." But Sir Arthur Conan Doyle never had Sherlock Holmes utter that phrase in any of his 26 short stories or four novel featuring Sherlock Holmes. That's a phrase invented by screenwriters, and appeared first in a movie in 1929.

So to borrow a literary misquotation, I want to talk about six doctrines that are "Elementary, my dear friends." These six elementary doctrines are grouped in three groups of two, so I call them Twin Foundational Truths. I want to take a few minutes to review these three sets of twin elementary truths, then talk about how some practical ways you can move on to maturity.

### **1. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD: Repentance from dead works and faith in God**

The first sets of twins teach us how we enter into a personal relationship with God. These are the first two baby steps of the Christian life, repentance and faith. The word repentance means "a change of mind that leads to a change in behavior." True repentance means changing your mind about how performing good deeds will get you into heaven. You can stop and ask the average person in East Texas, "How do you go to heaven?" The most common answer you'll receive is something like, "Do good and be good."

Many people think God has a set of scales in heaven. They think that all the good works you perform go on one side of the scales, and all the bad things you do go on the other side of the scales. And when you die, if your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds you go to heaven. But if your bad deeds outweigh your good deeds, you go to that other place that they don't want to mention. And most people think they are basically good.

Now, that's not taught in the Bible. To be totally honest, this is a core belief in Islam, which is a religion of works. The Qur'an says, "We will set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly." (Sura 21:47) "As for him whose scales are heavy (with good deeds) will live in Paradise. But he whose balance (of good deeds) will be found light will have his home in Hell." (Sura 101:6-9)

So those who believe their works will be weighed on a scale in heaven are really embracing a Muslim doctrine. The Bible teaches that we are all sinners and we are saved by grace through faith. The Bible teaches that no person is good enough to earn admission into heaven. So the first step in coming to God is to repent: change your mind about what it takes to go to heaven, and then you change the direction of your life.

The other side of this twin truth is FAITH in God. Repentance and faith aren't two separate acts; they are one simultaneous act. Hebrews 11 is the faith chapter of the Bible. And we

learned there that “without faith it is impossible to please God. For anyone who comes to God must believe that He exists and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6 MEV). Faith is not just believing that God exists. James tells us even the demons believe in God and tremble. Faith is fully trusting God with your future. Whenever you sit down, you are making a faith assessment. You look at the chair, or the pew and believe it is strong enough to support you. But you are practicing faith until you place your entire weight into that seat.

Frank Sinatra used to sing, “Love and marriage; Love and marriage. Go together like a horse and carriage. This I tell you brother: You can’t have one without the other.” The same can be said of repentance and faith. You can’t have one without the other. So how do you enter into a relationship with God? It’s elementary my dear friends: by repentance and faith.

## **2. OUR RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN THE CHURCH: Baptisms and the laying on of hands**

When we enter into a personal relationship with God, we will naturally want to connect with a New Testament Church. These two elementary doctrines are basic responsibilities we have for the church. The English word “baptize” is a transliteration of the Greek word that simply means to “immerse or dip.” Here the word is plural, because there were several different kinds of immersions practiced during Bible times. The Jews practiced ritual washing to cleanse themselves. Gentile converts to Judaism underwent this ritual bath as well. John the Baptist practiced a baptism of repentance that was different from that of the early Christians. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, Jesus said, “John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:5) He was predicting what would happen when the disciples were filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

Baptism in water is a step of obedience for those who put their faith in Jesus. On the Day of Pentecost, when Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, he preached a mighty Pentecostal sermon. When the people were convicted they asked him, “What shall we do?” He said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38). That day three thousand people were saved and baptized.

Ken Warren does a great job of reminding folks about what it means to be a member of Green Acres Baptist Church. In his article in today’s worship folder he clarifies: “A member of Green Acres Baptist Church is a believer and a follower of Jesus Christ who has been baptized by immersion at GABC or a church of similar doctrinal belief, who commits themselves to the responsibilities and benefits of joining the church by requesting membership and completing the process to establish that membership.”

For the past 2,000 years, water baptism has been the point of the profession of faith of new believers. It is where they made the revolutionary profession, “Jesus is my Lord.” So how do you become a part of a New Testament Church? It’s elementary, my dear friends: repentance, faith, and baptism.

The second twin of this pair is “the laying on of hands.” That speaks of our responsibility to pray for one another. Jesus would often lay hands on the sick when He healed them. He laid hands on the disciples and prayed that they would receive the Holy Spirit. When the church elected the first deacons, the apostles laid their hands on them and prayed for them. When the church sent out the first missionaries, Paul and Barnabas, they laid their hands on them and prayed for them. Paul reminded Timothy to never neglect the gift of ministry given to him by the laying on of hands of the elders.

There’s nothing spooky or magical about the laying on of hands. It’s just a way to physically and spiritually connect with others in prayer. We often place our hands and pray over those in our church who are going out on mission projects. Whenever I visit people in the hospital and pray for them, I always want to take their hand to make personal contact with them. So these twin doctrines teach us the elementary doctrines of baptism and prayer.

### **3. OUR READINESS FOR THE FUTURE: Resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment**

This third set of doctrinal twins deals with the future. The resurrection of Jesus was a central theme in the preaching of the early church. But this doctrine isn’t restricted to the resurrection of Jesus only. The New Testament teaches that one day, we will receive new, resurrection bodies like that of Jesus.

Paul wrote these words to encourage the church. “We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-53 NLT)

The final elementary truth has to do with eternal judgment. The Bible teaches that there will be two final judgments. One will be for Christians. At the judgment seat of Christ those of us who know the Lord will receive rewards based upon what we did with the gifts and abilities we were given. We will give an account for how well we managed the resources God gave us. This is not a judgment of condemnation, but one of commendation.

But there will be a separate judgment for all the Lost of history. According to Revelation 20, all the spiritually dead will stand before a Great White Throne to be judged. They won’t be judged by how many good or bad deeds they did. They will be judged on the basis of rejecting Jesus. And the Bible says if their names were not found written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, they would be cast into the lake of fire.

So how do you have your name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life? It’s elementary, my dear friends—by repentance from dead works and faith in God. All of these are elementary, foundational doctrines. Do you have them mastered? You must know your ABCs before you can

read. But you can't be content just saying the alphabet. You have to take these elementary truths and move on to maturity.

Sometimes people listening to a preacher experience frustration. A pastor will often tell you WHAT to do without telling you HOW to do it. I can say, "Grow up!" And you can say, "I WANT to grow as a Christian, but I'm not exactly sure how to do that."

Let me tell you HOW to grow. There are four things you can do on a consistent basis that will produce spiritual maturity. To help you remember, I've arranged these four practices to spell the word "GROW."

## **Get alone with God**

Jesus knew He only had three years of ministry before He would die on a cross. But He understood the importance of spending time alone with His Father every morning. We read in Mark 1:35, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."

There is no shortcut to growth. You need to have a personal quiet time when you get alone with God and pray. Let me give you a simple thought that can revolutionize your personal prayer life. Try listening to God as much as you talk. Sure, praise Him, thank Him, and lay your requests before the Lord. But listen for that still small voice.

For much of my childhood my dad was a forester for International Paper Company. So we spent a lot of time in the woods. He could name every different kind of tree. We had a wood-burning fireplace in our home because that was the only kind around at that time. But my dad would have never in a million years ever paid for firewood. We simply went out into the woods and found dead or dying hardwood trees, and we'd cut our own firewood. I learned to use a chain saw at an early age. But I also learned the value of keeping the teeth on the chain sharpened. My dad had a tool he used to carefully sharpen each of the teeth. He would always say, "Son, you're never wasting time when you stop and sharpen the saw."

I've also discovered in my life and ministry that time I spend alone with God isn't time wasted. It's just the opposite. It's like sharpening the saw. That time you spend with God gives you an edge over the challenges of the day. Does it seem like your life is dull and you've lost the spiritual edge? Get alone with God to start every day.

I came across a little poem written by that famous author, Unknown. It's called "All That You Need."

*We mutter and sputter  
We fume and we spurt  
We mumble and grumble  
Our feelings get hurt.*

*We can't understand things  
Our vision grows dim,  
When all that we need  
Is to spend time with HIM.*

## **Read God's Word**

When you get alone with God to pray, you should also use that time to let God speak to you through His Word. In Psalm 1, we learned that a blessed person is someone who meditates on God's Word day and night. As Joshua prepared the greatest challenge of His life God told him, "Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do." (Joshua 1:8 NLT)

One of the biggest complaints I hear from baby Christians is that they tried reading the Bible but they couldn't understand it so they quit. If you want to grow as a Christian, don't start reading the Bible in Genesis because once you get to Leviticus and Numbers you're going to bog down in the genealogical mud. The best suggestion I've given young Christians is to take a short book of the New Testament and read it every day for a month. Take Philippians, which has only four chapters, and try reading it every day for thirty days. Then pick another New Testament book like Mark, which has sixteen chapters, and read four chapters a day for a solid month. When you read the Bible repetitively, it gets better and better. You'll hear God speaking to you in passages you've already read a dozen times before. Try it.

## **Offer encouragement to other believers**

This means you should fellowship with other believers on a regular basis. I'm not just talking about the importance of worshipping and studying on Sunday. You need to share fellowship every day. We all need encouragement, and the best way to receive encouragement is to GIVE encouragement.

The Bible says, "Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24-25 NLT)

## **Witness to others about Jesus**

Witnessing isn't about memorizing a sales pitch for Jesus. It's simply telling people how Jesus has changed your life. A witness in a court of law is only asked to relate what they saw and experienced. The early Christians couldn't stop telling everyone they met how Jesus was alive and had changed their lives. The Bible says, "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4:33 NKJV)

If you knew the cure for cancer but didn't share it, that would be a crime against humanity. We know the cure for sin sickness, and His name is Jesus. If you will regularly spend time alone with God in prayer and digging into His Word; encouraging other believers, and sharing your faith, I guarantee you will grow as a Christian.

## **CONCLUSION**

The main way you can know if you are moving on to maturity is if you are becoming more and more like Jesus. If you remember, we had a cold snap in December where the temperature dipped down into the twenties. I was meeting someone for lunch at a local restaurant and had walked quickly across the parking lot because it was freezing and I was underdressed. Just as I was walking in the front door, a group of ladies were leaving. I held the door open for them because my dad taught me to be a gentleman. As one of those ladies walked out the door she said, "Jesus, it's cold out here!" I cringe every time I hear someone talk like that, but I decided to try to turn it into a positive. She said, "Jesus! It's cold out here." I said, "You know, you can just call me David, but thanks for the compliment." She looked at me like I was crazy and walked away. When people look at your life, do they sometimes mistake you for the Lord Jesus? If you have desire to grow, Jesus will mold your personality into His own. As the Bible says in Philippians 1:6, "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

## OUTLINE

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2. OUR RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN THE CHURCH: Baptisms and the laying on of hands
3. OUR READINESS FOR THE FUTURE: Resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment

### HOW TO G.R.O.W. AS A CHRISTIAN

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